Health hazards of asbestos

662. SHRI R.S. GAVAI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering to ban all activities associated with asbestos, including its mining, manufacturing, use and trade, on account of the health hazards;

(b) if not, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government have received a request for ban on asbestos from environmentalists and doctors;

(d) if so, the details thereof; and

(e) the reaction of Government thereto?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) No Sir. However, mining, manufacture of asbestos and asbestos-based products is regulated as per the provisions and procedures of EIA Notification, 1994. Crocidolite (Blue Asbestos) has been put in the restricted list of imports by Ministry of Commerce, Directorate General of Foreign Trade in October, 1994. Further import of waste asbestos (dust and fibre) has been prohibited by Gazette Notification dated 13.10.1998.

(c) to (e) As per the reports available, no such request from environmentalists and doctors have been received.

Cleaning of Yamuna

663. SHRIMATI SAROJ DUBEY: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have reviewed the status report proposed by the DDA, Urban Art Commission and other Government agencies on cleaning the Yamuna river;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the details of reports/project reports already proposed on cleaning the Yamuna river; and

(d) the achievement made in cleaning the Yamuna so far and the Central assistance provided and utilized in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) and (b) Government is not aware of any status report prepared by the DDA or Urban Art Commission on cleaning of Yamuna river. However, the Government of National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi had commissioned a study to Water and Power Consultancy Services (WAPCOS) for preparation of a pre-feasibility report for construction of a parallel intercepting sewer along Yamuna in Delhi to prevent the discharge of untreated sewage into the river. A quick study report with an estimated cost of Rs. 800 crore was submitted by WAPCOS. The project was not found feasible as it envisaged to tackle only the point sources of pollution entering the river whereas as integrated action plan tackling all components responsible for pollution of Yamuna in Delhi is necessary for abatement of pollution in the river.

(c) and(d) Government launched the Yamuna Action Plan in April, 1993 for cleaning the river. The estimated cost of the Action Plan is Rs. 510 crore comprising Rs. 226 crore for Haryana, Rs. 250 crore for Uttar Pradesh, Rs. 20 crore for Delhi and the remaining Rs. 14 crore for miscellaneous items of work. In addition, under the extended phase of Yamuna Action Plan, a project at an estimated cost of Rs. 222 crore has been approved recently. The break up of the approved cost is: Haryana Rs. 22 crore, Delhi Rs. 167 crore, U.P. Rs. 29 crore and the remaining Rs. 4 crore for miscellaneous works. The action plan covers 21 towns of which 12 are in Haryana and 8 in Uttar Pradesh besides Delhi. All these works are targeted to be completed by March, 2002. In addition, the Government of NCT of Delhi is implementing projects for construction of additional sewage treatment plants, sewering of regularised unauthorised colonies and refurbishing of trunk sewerage system, under an integrated action plan to clean Yamuna.

The water quality of river Yamuna upstream of Delhi upto Palla is within prescribed standards. However, there has not been much improvement in the water quality in the river stretch along Delhi and downstream as the major works in Delhi are still to be completed. So far a Central assistance of Rs. 403.44 crore has been provided under the Yamuna Action Plan and an amount of Rs. 458.24 crore (including State's share) has been spent on this Action Plan.

Environmental damage by Numbul in Imphal

664. SHRI W. ANGOU SINGH: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of the fact that the Numbul river running in the midst of Imphal city, has greatly damaged the environment of the city area; and